

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1378
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN
USIA WASHDC 1310
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 393

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, XF
SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA ALTERS TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW WITH ASAD

REF: DAMASCUS 329

1. A COMPARISON OF TEXT OF TIME INTERVIEW OBTAINED FROM
WYNN WITH DAMASCUS RADIO VERSION SHOWS SEVERAL SUBSTANTIVE
ALTERNATIONS FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION FOR TEXT AGREED UPON
BETWEEN WYNN AND PRESIDENT'S INTERPRETER. TO WYNN'S
QUESTION ABOUT PROJECTED LINK BETWEEN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN
STATE AND JORDAN, SYRIANS ADDED: "THERE WAS EVEN TALK ABOUT
A LINK WITH SYRIA AS WELL." ASAD'S RESPONSE IN TURN WAS
"AS FAR AS SYRIA IS CONCERNED, WE HAVE ACTUALLY NEVER THOUGHT
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OF ESTABLISHING ANY LEGAL OR CONSTITUTIONAL LINK BETWEEN
SYRIA AND A PALESTINIAN STATE, AND WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED
THIS SUBJECT WITH ANYONE." (COMMENT: THIS ADDITION IS
NOT A NEW DEPARTURE; IT REITERATES STATEMENT ASAD MADE
IN EARLY DECEMBER TO JOSEPH KRAFT. IT EMPHASIZES SARG
INTENTION TO DOWNPLAY ANY SPECULATION THAT JORDANIAN-
PALESTINIAN LINK IS PART OF SYRIAN BLUEPRINT TO DOMINATE

ITS NEIGHBORS.)

2. WYNN'S QUERY ABOUT SIGNING OF DOCUMENT WAS BROKEN DOWN INTO TWO QUESTIONS WITH SECOND PART ADDED BY SYRIANS: "CAN SUCH A DOCUMENT BE CONSIDERED A DOCUMENT UNDER AUSPICES OF UN, AND NOT A BILATERAL PEACE TREATY BUT RATHER A DOCUMENT SIGNED BY EACH SIDE COMMITTING ITSELF TO END STATE OF WAR?" ASAD, ACCORDING TO SYRIAN VERSION, ADDED IN HIS RESPONSE THAT PEACE EFFORTS WOULD TAKE PLACE "UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF TWO SUPERPOWERS." (COMMENT: ALTERNATION OF QUESTION EMPHASIZES SARG DETERMINATION TO FRAME ULTIMATE DOCUMENT WITHIN MULTILATERAL RATHER THAN BILATERAL CONTEXT.

3. RE CONVENING OF GENEVA MEPC, WHEREAS WYNN ASKED STRAIGHT-FORWARD QUESTION WHETHER GENEVA COULD BE CONVENED AS EARLY AS MARCH, QUESTION WAS MODIFIED TO READ: "IN VIEW OF FACT THAT INAUGURATION OF NEW U.S. PRESIDENT WILL TAKE PLACE THIS MONTH AND ELECTIONS IN ISRAEL WILL NOT TAKE PLACE BEFORE MAY, AND ARABS HAVE CALLED FOR RECONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE IN MARCH, DO YOU THINK IT IS REALISTIC TO EXPECT CONFERENCE TO BE CONVENED AT EARLY DATE OF MARCH, AND DO YOU INSIST ON THIS DATE," MEDIA INCLUDED ASAD'S RESPONSE CARRIED BY TIME THAT ISRAELI OBSTINANCY MAY PREVENT GENEVA CONVOCAION, BUT DELETED REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY THAT U.S. ADMINISTRATION MAY UNDERTAKE ENERGETIC PEACE INITIATIVE. (COMMENT: THIS ALTERNATION SIGNALS LIKELY ARAB FALLBACK POSITION IF MARCH DEADLINE NOT MET.)

4. SYRIAN MEDIA, AS TIME NEW YORK OFFICE, DELETED Q AND CONFIDENTIAL

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A ABOUT PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA FROM BEGINNING (REFTEL PARA 3).

5. AFTER FURTHER ANALYSIS OF TEXT, WE CONCLUDE THAT ASAD'S RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT WHAT HE WOULD DO IF PLO CHOSE NOT TO ATTEND GENEVA IS MORE AMBIGUOUS THAN IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED. HIS STATEMENT THAT, "IF PLO REFRAINS FROM PARTICIPATING IN GENEVA CONFERENCE THIS WOULD NOT PARALYZE MOVEMENT OF ARAB COUNTRIES CONCERNED," DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT ARAB STATES WOULD PROCEED GENEVA WITHOUT PLO. NONETHELESS, PRESIDENT'S ANSWER STILL REPRESENTS ELEMENT OF PRESSURE ON PALESTINIANS TO JOIN IN SYRO-EGYPTIAN EFFORTS TO RENEW PEACE PROCESS.

6. OTHERWISE, SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE PUBLISHED ALL KEY POINTS OF INTERVIEW. TEXT ITSELF BROADCAST NUMEROUS TIMES ON RADIO. PRESS HAS USED SUCH HEADLINES AS: "PRES. ASAD SPELLS OUT CONDITIONS FOR JUST PEACE -- ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL, REIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND ENDING STATE OF WAR. "WE

SUPPORT ARABS' GOING TO GENEVA AS UNIFIED DELEGATION.
GENEVA CONFERENCE MAY NOT BE CONVENED DUE TO ISRAEL'S
INTRASIGENCE. AMERICA'S ROLE IS INCONSISTENT WITH ITS
RESPONSIBILITIES AS GREAT POWER."
MURPHY

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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 19-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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